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A RETROSPECT
Christianity in India

(An exposition of the RSS view
on the Relevance of Christianity in India today)

By
Shripaty Sastry

शारदा पुस्तकालय
(संशोधना शा. द. केन्द्र)
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BHARATIYA VICHAR SADHANA, PUNE

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A PUBLISHER'S NOTE

In the following pages the reader will find an exposition of the R.S.S. view on the relevance of Christianity in India, today. This exposition was made by an eminent R.S.S. worker of Pune - Shri Shripaty Sastry, in a direct dialogue with a distinguished Christian fraternity gathered at the De Nobili College, Pune. Shri Shripaty Sastry received a communication from Dr.Mathew R Lederle, SJ, a Pune based German Jesuit Missionary on February 24th, 1983 in which the latter had, on behalf of the Organising Committee, Student's Council, Jnanadeepa Vidyapeeth (Papal Seminary) extended an invitation to him to participate in a Seminar to be held in the beginning of July 1983 to explain the R.S.S. views on the *Relevance of Christianity in India Today.*

The invitation was accepted and Shri Sastry received a follow-up letter on June 9th, 1983 from Shri J.Felix Raj, SJ, the Chairman of the Seminar Organising Committee confirming the same. He wrote :

> Thanks for having accepted our invitation to share your valuable experience and reflections with us in the Seminar on the *Relevance of Christianity in India Today.*. Your talk will be from a R.S.S. point of view on July 8, Friday at 10.30 a.m.

He further added :

> I shall be happy if you could send to me a transcript of your talk one of these days. We would like to use it for the book to be published shortly after the Seminar.

Jnanadeep Vidyapeeth (Papal Seminary) is an institution of Philosophy and Religion run by the Jesuits in the De Nobili College, Pune. The Seminar was held in the Papal Seminary Hall under the Chairmanship of Shri Felix Raj, SJ, and Shri Shripaty Sastry addressed the distinguished gathering of students, professors, priests, nuns and missionaries. It included a few from the foreign countries. The talk was followed by an hour long session for questions and answers. The speech as well as the questions and answers were tape recorded by the Organisers of the Seminar and on request they were kind enough to lend it out to us along with the synopsis that had been submitted, for the purpose of this publication.

Certain minor editings were considered necessary before the speech was put in print, a publisher's obligation while presenting a spoken word in the form of a printed one. And again certain points raised during the question and answer session but which were not related to the main theme of the speech were dileted. The present publication is the edited form of the speech made, question and answers that followed and the synopsis that had been submitted to the seminar.

An edited copy was conveyed to the Chairman of the Seminar Organising Committee before it went to Press. While acknowledging the same the Chairman wrote to us :

De Nobili College
PUNE
October 26, 1983

. . . . .His (Shripaty Sastry's) was one of the most interesting and thought provoking talks to the student participants of the Seminar. His openness and frankness were highly appreciated by all the staff and students at Jananadeepa Vidyapeeth.

I hope this cordial invitation of ours to an active RSS man to share his views on Christianity with us will be the first step towards an open and fraternal dialogue between Christians and RSS in India. I am sure such a dialogue will greatly enable us to work for the betterment of people and for promoting justice and peace in our country.

With warm regards to RSS friends,

Yours sincerely,
Sd/- J. Felix Raj, SJ.
Chairman,
(Seminar Organising Committee)

We share and reciprocate the fond hopes and in fact, it is this optimism that prompted us to bring out the present publication. The publication of this booklet at this moment is particularly opportune as the country is seized with the most vexatious problem of contemporary India, namely, the problem of the religious minorities and the debate and discussion over this vital issue all over the country must be based on historic facts. The *Retrospect* is an exposition of the RSS views on the *Relevance of Christianity in India, Today* in a nutshell. We sought the permission to publish it both because of its subject matter and of the able handling of it by the author.

We are thankful to the JDV students Council in general and to Shri Felix Raj, SJ, in particular for their cooperation which made this publication possible. Our thanks are due to our many friends who helped us in preparing the manuscript for print and a formal thanks to printers - Maharashtra Mudran Shala, Pune, is but a poor expression of gratitude for their excellent work.

THE PUBLISHERS

Brothers and Sisters,

I have been called upon to speak on the topic 'Relevance of Christianity in India Today' as a RSS man looks at it. As you may be aware the RSS is wedded to the organising of the Hindu people on the common basis of their Hindu-ness which is another name for the intense love of this country and its culture. The RSS connotation of the word 'Hindu' is national not religious. In fact 'Hindu' is not a religion in the sense in which Islam or Christianity are understood to be so. Let me amplify.

Hindu - A Parliament of Religions

India is an ancient nation, perhaps the most ancient. Withstanding all the shocks of cruel history, India has lived a long civilised life united by a common culture which, for many centuries has been characterised by remarkable continuity. During the course of this mighty, long history numerous religious beliefs were propounded and numerous religious practices were evolved in India. A large number of people hold the Vedas as the source of their religion, they are Hindus. A considerable section of our countrymen reject the Vedic authority but they are also Hindus. A majority of the people of this country are image-worshippers, yet they are Hindus. Quite a few people like the Arya Samajis decry the wisdom of image-worship but they are Hindus still. Those who call themselves as agnostics are also Hindus. There is a school of thought propounded by an ancient Indian sage, *Charvaka* by name, which refuses to believe in the existence of God. They are pure materialists but they are Hindus. Hindu is not the name of any form of worship but a confederation, or a parliament of numerous religious practices sharing in common the love of this country, its history and its cultural heritage. Christianity in India has not yet federated itself with it. I visualise a time, in the distant future when it will become a sister federated unit. A Hindu does not visualise God as a Christian God or a Muslim God or a Buddhist God or a Jain God. To a Hindu, God is God pure and simple. A Hindu does not distinguish ideas of God as true and false, adopting one particular idea as the standard for the whole human race. He accepts the obvious fact that mankind seeks its goal of God at various levels and in various directions. He feels sympathy with every stage of the search and accepts all religious notions as facts.

Therefore, people professing various religions abound in this country and as Hindus we take pride in this situation. If, tomorrow, one of our countrymen wants to practice a particular religious faith and if there is no scope for it, as a Hindu, I think India has grown the poorer for it. But never did our fore-fathers believe that the religions that were greeted with 'welcome' would one day throw a mortal challenge to the unity, integrity and happiness of this country.

Trauma of Partition

Remember the partition of India in 1947. It brought untold suffering and unprecedented humiliation in its train. Men, women and children were given a profuse blood bath when we were gloating over our 'bloodless revolution'. A glorious dream of independent, happy India, born out of love, goodwill and brotherhood, a dream nurtured for generations was blown to pieces because of religion. The work of Mahatma Gandhi and all the great patriots of this country was destroyed in no time. Therefore, one must be extremely careful in determining the place of religion vis-a-vis the nation.

Even after Independence the problem of religious minorities continues to be one of the most vexing and intriguing problems of contemporary India. The temperament of the people of the country, and the trauma of India's partition contributed to the thinking of the Constituent Assembly on religious minority groups.

There are elaborate articles on "minority rights" ensuring freedom of religious beliefs; in fact in no other constitution have the minorities had it so good as in ours. One might even call India 'a paradise of minorities'. Yet, in no other country the religious groups have made such a serious encroachment on the happy, harmonious national life as in India.

Christianity is a part of the problem under study. As a religion it is associated with India for centuries and Christians are a religious minority consisting of about 3% of the total population. They are numerically strong in certain states such as Kerala and the North-East India region. In such states as Andhra and Tamilnadu their number is not negligible. So also in a few small pockets like Goa, where they are not only influential but often decisive.

The Background

In the beginning, the rulers of the East India Company did not show much enthusiasm for missionary activity. The Company recognised that the people of India were peculiarly sensitive in the matter of religion. In 1781, evidence before a Committee of the Commons elicited the unanimous opinion that "any interference with the religion of the natives would eventually ensure the total destruction of the British Power". Gradually, a policy of religious neutrality was evolved. But the Governors and Governors General privately sympathised with and suported the Missionary activities in India. The evangelical party in England was gaining ground and they climaxed their efforts to win public support for "Christianising India".[1] They succeeded in their efforts and in July 1813, a clause was inserted in the Charter Act by which Missionaries of all faiths were allowed to enter India. Missionary exertions were recognised by the Legislature and it gave a profound impetus to the movement.

The debate and the ultimate victory of 'the Party of Saints' served to attract other Western nations to pastures available in India for the missionary work. The Charter Act of 1813 opened the gates of India for a perennial influx of the holymen from Christendom. In 1813, for example, there were six American Protestant Missions moving in India and in 1910 nearly 1800 American Protestant Agencies were working in India[2] for propagating Christianity. Since then there is an influx of missionaries and theirs was the religion of the ruling class.

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[1] Lovett Sn H.V. "Social Policy to 1858" -The Cambridge History of India, Vol. VI, Cambridge Press, 1932, p. 121.

The missionaries were aware that certain elements in Christian preachings - particularly its intolerance of non-Christian faiths - have proved disruptive of India's cultural heritage; yet since their object was to make this heritage subservient to Christianity they relished the situation. As a consequence many Hindus felt quite justified in regarding Christianity as a political as well as a religious weapon of the West.

Happy Gestures

During the pre-independence period certain prominent Christians of India had stood against communal representation. Early in the twentieth century Joseph Baptista, a prominent Christian leader in Bombay said, "I thoroughly disapprove of separate electorate for Indian Christians in water-tight compartments". He was wisest when he considered it best not to alienate the sympathy of majority by clamouring for separate electorates. He could stand up against the pressures of certain Muslim League leaders and strongly refused to have anything to do with them on this proposal. Bishop Azariah another leading Christian, opposed communal representation and in 1928 he issued an appeal recommending the abolition of all forms of communal representation. K.J.Paul of the Y.M.C.A. movement advised : "We cannot exalt merit, character and efficiency in the services or insist on probity in public leadership, and at the same time do what is commonly called fight over community".

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[2] American Board, "Centenary of America's Christian Connection with India," Annual Report 1913, p. 139.

There were quite a few well-intentioned Christians and their goodness was duly reciprocated by the Hindus. Christianity in India was mixed up with the British rule and to some extent with the rule of the Portguese. The Indian Christians were uneasily aware that their bonafides were under a cloud and one of the foremost leaders of the Christian community, H.C. Mookerjee, confessed : "We have to demonstrate by every word we utter and by every act we perform that the professing of a different religious faith has not tended in the least to make us less Indian in our outlook than our non-Christian brethren, that we are prepared to play our part and to shoulder our share of the responsibility in every kind of work undertaken for the benefit of our country as a whole".

Jesus Christ and the Church

I revere Christ. One of the reasons why I do so is that I am a Hindu. There is much to admire in Christianity - the life-story of Jesus Christ, sayings of the prophets, educative parables and the ideals presented therein. The precious teachings in the 'Sermon on the Mount' certainly leave a deep impression upon the mind. But despite all this, one is unable to identify oneself with the orthodox Christianity and the Church. So in India when Christianity challenges Hinduism the Hindus draw a sharp distinction between Christian sectarianism and dogmatism and the spirit and teachings of Christ. It is a line that separates Christ from Christians. The Holy Bible and Jesus Christ are held in high reverence by the Hindus but the activities carried on by the Churches in His name are looked upon with suspicion.

The church has discovered that Hinduism is full of faults. The fiction of a degenerated India and debased Hinduism seems to be the life-blood of missionaries and they have no intention of parting with it. Missionaries boast of giving pagan India the first printing press. India is thankful. But how can a Hindu forget that the very first pamphlet Carey's Printing Press at Serampore published contained nothing but insulting and filthy attacks on Hindu Culture. During his talk at Detroit, Vivekananda had drawn this line distinctly.

He had said : When you come to us as missionaries, you ought to throw over all idea of nationality. Jesus did not go about among English officials attending champagne suppers. He did not care to get his wife into high European society. If your missionary does not follow Christ, what right has he to call himself a Christian. We want missionaries of Christ. Let such come to India by the hundreds and thousands. Bring Christ's life to us and let it permeate every village and corner of India".

The ability to obtain converts by paying money during famine hardly qualifies anybody to be a disciple of Christ. Christ crucified has become a silent spectator to the foulest exploitation of His name by his doubtful disciples.

Politics of Conversion

Indeed in the whole of the Christian-Hindu strained relationship there has been no greater cause of friction than the Christian campaign of conversion. When the one who is in an advantageous position seeks to force his conception of God and the Universe on the other who is in a vulnerable position, when the one strikes at that which is deepest and most precious in the heart of the other, he invites resistance.

The Christians of India are converts or descendents of converts whose conversion had been secured during some period of history by force or fraud; conversion by persuasion is a rarity. Voluntary change of faith prompted by spiritual motives, nobody objects to. The Rev. Tilak, Pandita Ramabai are of such type. Change of faith did not diminish their love of India's cultural heritage. But how are whole villages converted en mass in no time? Are mass conversions prompted by any spiritual motive? Voluntary change of faith is preceded by great psychological revolution; nobody abandoned Hinduism that way. Most of the converts have been victims of threats, allurements financial stringency, ignorance, deception and persecution. The less said the better about the role of the sword in securing recruits for the gospel. It is an ugly past. The Hindus who had gladly given asylum to the Jewish wanderers, the exiled Parsis and persecuted Christians found themselves victims of proselytisation by Christians.

For quite a long time there had been a continuous decline of Hindus in number; when under the British religion became the basis of representation, the missionary movement acquired momentum. Even a small increase in Christian population and a decrease among the Hindus would bring in its train a chain of troubles, political and social. What ails India's north-east is this factor. It is the political consequence of the supposed religious conversions.

There is something unhealthy in the whole missionary idea. To go to a people like the Hindus, a race of high culture and a long tradition with philosophical, ethical and religious systems ante-dating Christianity and to go avowedly to save its people from damnation is certainly something grotesque! Humanitarian and philanthrophic works are only excuses to enable themselves to go near their victims to tear out the ancient religion from the simple and trusting hearts. Gandhiji wrote : "Conversion now-a-days has become a matter of business, like any other. I remember having read a missionary report saying how much it cost per her head to convert and then presenting a budget for the next harvest".[3] He further maintained : "If I had power and could legislate, I should certainly stop all proselytising. For Hindu households, the advent of a missionary has meant the disruption of the family, coming in the wake of change of dress, manners, language, food and drink". What Gandhiji wanted to stop, viz. Conversion has been held by the Christian missionary as his basic religious right. The best of them, Mother Teresa, justified it very recently in an interview * by saying that, 'Conversion is a change of mind by love'." Remove the tapestry of the language, it is aggression on the Hindu society. Therefore, a Hindu cannot condone conversion and he must not.

A large part of Asia has gone Islamic and another large chunk communist. Their doors are closed for

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[3] (1) Young India, 23.4.1931 and (*) India Today, 31.5.1983.

Christian missionaries to storm in. So, India has emerged as a fertile grazing ground. Christianity is now working overtime trying to convert our people, particularly the tribals. The rich white missionary agencies are making use of the country's poverty and social ills to further their ends. They offer temptations, a cardinal sin, in order to effect conversions. The Baptist missionary in North-Eastern belt, for example, reward with cheap polyester trousers to those tribals who change their religion; with motor bicycles if they also help their brothers to be converted. In Madhya Pradesh as the Neogy Report showed, the missionaries give small loans of say five or ten dollars to the tribals on interest, loans which they know could not be easily paid back but the payment of which can be waived off if the debtors accepted Christianity.

On more sophisticated levels, they run schools and dispensaries, asylums and orphanages and engage in so-called social work. Since the basic motive is proselytisation or creating congenial climate for poselytizers, these services are tainted and poisoned. Social work has now become big business. It is not disinterested philanthropy. To a superficial observer the Christianity centres appear not only quite harmless, but as the very embodiment of sympathy and love for humanity. Words like 'service', 'human salvation' flow endlessly from their speeches. The ultimate objective is to de-Hinduise. The people of our country, simple and innocent as they are, are taken in by all these things. The sweetest of tongues is accompanied by the sharpest of teeth. Is it not arrogance going in the garb of humility? It reminds me of the story of *Pootana*, an evil woman who made a show of motherly affection and wanted to breast-feed infant Krishna. But it was not milk but poison.

Christianity and National Unity

One wonders why Christian proselytisation should lead to an excess of love-bond with a Western country. For some time it was even justified as an attempt to stem the tide of communism. The converts were given not only a psychological affinity with the people of the Western' countries but were weaned away from the national society. The language, the script, the dress, other modes of life, the feasts and the festivals, names and nomenclatures all undergo a change. It is this aspect of Christianity that has today come into conflict with nationalism and has created a strong suspicion in the minds of the national societies. That explains why conversion of a man to Christianity is not just a change in the form of worship but a change in the priority of loyalties. That again explains why Christians are looked upon by many as a potential fifth column.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was a bitter critic of the traditional Hindu society and announced that he would change his religion. But he rejected Islam and Christianity as alternatives though there were tempting offers and invitations. Why did he reject them? He said : "If my people become Muslims they become denationalised and if they become Christians British rule will be strengthened'. One wonders why an increase in the number of Christians strengthen the British rule? In the words of Lord Halifax, the Secretary of State, "Every additional Christian is an additional bond of Union with this Country and an additional source of strength to the empire".4

The creation of 'Nagaland' is a glaring example in point. That open rebellion going on in the Naga Hills is all engineered by the Christian missionaries was acepted even by Nehru. The Nagas used foreign arms against Indian army. They were American arms. Our Planes were shot down. The rebel leader of this gangsterism fled the country and he was given asylum by a noted Christian Missionary - Michael Scott who abetted him in making various statements damaging our reputation. International pressure, to which our Delhi rulers were unduly sensitive, was built up by the Christians. They started 'peace talks' and the 'peace mission' included this gentle-man Michael Scott. The dream is to convert Nagaland into an independent State ridden and dominated by the Christian fanatics. Today, when a Christian Naga comes to Shillong he says, 'I am going to India' as if he is a non-Indian.

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4. Niyogi Commission Report, Part II, Ch. 11, pp. 14 - 15.

The troubles that the Indians experienced during the agitation for a 'separate' Jharkahnd in Bihar, the desecration of ancient Hindu temples in Kerala including *Shabarimalai*, the trouble engineered at the Vivekanand Rock Memorial premises at *Kanyakumari*, the recent troubles at *Nilakkal* in Kerala and the pitched battles which the rebel Mizos are fighting with Indian army are all the gifts of Christians. Christianity in India today is losing its identity as a religion and acquiring the identity of an imperialist ideology. Their religious functionaries are more than priests. In the words of an African nationalist : "When they (Christian Missionaries) came, we had the land and they had the Bible, and today we have the Bible and they have our land".

Foreign Missionaries Please Go Home

India is infested with a large number of these uninvited guests, the Michael Scotts and the Father Ferars. One need hardly emphasise public attitude towards them. They have come to India to 'save' the 'heathens' from 'damnation'. We are to believe that they have come on a mission of mercy.

Let a missionary try to convert a single Muslim in any Islamic country, he is sure to be lynched and murdered immediately by the Muslim mobs even before the state apparatus could confiscate visas and issue orders of expulsion. Can he recruita convert in any communist country without being caught as an 'imperialist agent' and sent to a labour camp? Are not certain missionaries languishing in prisons in certain South-East Asian countries on the charge of 'subversion'? Even Buddhist Burma has barred his entry. One would shudder to think how the Boxers dealt with the missionaries in China. I do not want India to be marred with any such ugly event. Every child knows what reception awaits Christian Missionaries in Bangla Desh and Pakistan. It is desirable that they should not take India for granted. It is time that they should return home. Go they should while the going is good. I want every foreign missionary to reach his home back safely with sweet memories of India. Mahatma Gandhi was categorical - "If you feel that India has a message to give to the world, that India's religions too are true and you come as fellow-helpers and fellow-seekers there is a place for you here. But if you come as preachers of the 'true gospel' to a people who are wandering in darkness, so far as I am concerned, you can have no place".5 Therefore, Indian Christianity requires to be immediately de-internationalised.

Christ and his teachings are quite safe and secure in the hands of Indian Christians. They have produced bishops, archbishops and even cardinals. They have even produced abundant literature on Christianity in the vernaculars. The Western Christian countries that have themselves rejected Christianity are keeping it for export to India. The foreign eccelésiastical know-how is not at all needed. Therefore, the foreign missionaries must return home, the earlier the better. A foreigner can come to India as a student, a merchant, a visitor, a sportsman or in any capacity except as a ruler or a missionary. In either case he comes to 'impose'. It is this 'imposition' that the Hindus resist. I need not remind you how the Hindus reacted to the activities of Father Ferar. It is not a simple outburst but a writing on the wall.

Harijan Christians

Representatives of four Christian Organisations called on the Prime Minister recently, stressing that the benefits available to Hindu Harijans be extended to the Christian Harijans also. Christianity was offered as a way out to the Hindu Harijans but once they are christianised, the old basis is re-borrowed. It is a confession that the Hindu Harijans converted to Christianity are not benefited and their economic condition is not improved and the change of religion is not a change for the better. The number of former converts returning to the Hindu fold is also increasing. You cannot give equality you promise at the time of enticement. But you want to have the best of both worlds.

In June 1981 about 200 Hindus and 50 Christians of Kurayoor Village, only 40 KM from Madurai embraced Islam. The reason is Harijan Hindus and Harijan Christians suffer from the same disabilities. Christianity has failed to overcome the so called evils of casteism. There are clear distinct groups within with absolutely no social exchange and the backward class converts are still regarded as low-caste Christians by others.

In a reply to a question 'Are not Christians entitled to combat untouchability' Mahatma Gandhi said, "Not only are the Christians entitled, but it is their duty to combat untouchability in their own midst. But if the question is that Christians should combat untouchability in Hinduism my answer is that they simply cannot do it because untouchability of Hinduism should not be untouchability of Christians. The anti-untouchability movement means weaning Hindus from their error. This cannot be effectively done by non-Hindus, even as Hindus cannot bring about religious reform among Christians and Mussalmans. If the question means that Christian should combat untouchability among Hindus by converting untouchables to Christianity they do not advance the cause in any shape or form; the cause being reform among caste Hindus. If the latter repented their sin the Harijans would be delivered from the yoke of untouchability in a moment. Conversion can .never do it. It can only add to the prevailing bitterness and introduce a disturbing factor in a situation which is already bad".[6]

Christianity - A Vote Bank

In order to accommodate diverse religious groups in a happy national life secularism was propounded. It suited the Indian temperament as well. It was a misfortune that the concept of secularism which is enshrined in the Constitution of India and which has become the most sacred slogan for all our political parties should be distorted, mis-interpreted, and misused to the maximum to block out the least little expression of Hindu ethos and of Hindu Culture in the State apparatus and the public life of India. Secularism became an umbrella under which many politicians patronised religious minorities so that they could reach the citadels of Power. Religious minorities became Vote-banks.

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[6] Harijan, 20.4.1934

Thus, certain political parties have come to develop a vested interest in according a special treatment nay, a preferential treatment to the religious minorities and have formed their minority cells for the purpose. The Government has its Minority Commission. Since they are familiar with the political behaviour of the religious groups each wants to have a slice in the Christian cake.

The Christians are exploiting this terrible weakness of the parties and politicians. The way they conducted their agitation against the Freedom of Religion Bill, the recent agitation against certain Text Books versions in Maharashtra, the incidents in the Kanyakumari district and the Nilakkal troubles in Kerala that are now going on are all examples of the political pressure which Christians can build up on the basis of their voting strength. The above incidents are convincing proof of the militant communal role which the Indian Christianity has, of late, opted for.

Return of the Converts

For long the Hindus had developed a suicidal habit of declaring these converts, as 'Outcastes' and the Hindu house had only 'exits' and 'no entrance'. They did not take back converts willing to return to the ancestral faith. But of late, Hindus have become alive to the dangers inherent in this one-way traffic and decided to throw open the gates of Hinduism to the lost tribes. If Christianity claims conversion as its basic right, it must give the same right to the Hindus so that they could claim their lost brethern back. As Dr. Rajendra Prasad wrote in his *India Divided* "If the Hindus, on their side also start converting non-Hindus to their faith, it is no business of the non-Hindus, specially if they are themselves engaged in the work of conversion, to object. The Hindus must have the same right of propagating their faith as others have. But men are not always guided by logic or by a sense of justice and fairness". To a Hindu moreover it is not 'conversion' but a recall or return to 'Home'.

Christianity and Secularism

In order to promote a happy coexistence of diverse religions, secularism was propounded. The Christian Church will not hesitate to approve the secularist ideals. The gullible Hindu dances in delight at the response evoked by his theories of Secularism and *Sarva Dharma Sama Bhav.* But you cannot hoodwink all. I remember an incident associated with the life of Mao Tse- Tung. An American Journalist met Mao during one of his Long March hide-outs and said : 'In America many people believe that you are only an agrarian reformer not a Communist, what have you to say?". Mao smiled and said : 'I do not care what belief certain sons of bitches are having about me as long as the belief helps my revolution'.

A Christian missionary talks in the loudest language about secularism because it helps his conversion and denationalisation activities. Ask him whether he is ready to accord equal respect to other religions and display his belief in *Serva Dharma Sama Bhav* he throws his hands up and says 'my religious faith does not permit it'. According to him all others are 'heathens' to be 'saved' from 'damnation' by making them believe in the 'One Word of that One Son of that One God'. This is the nonsense of his secularism. Mother Teresa was asked in the same interview what side she would take if confronted with the old dilemma of Church versus Galileo, she unhesitantingly said : 'Church'. In vain did Europe fight for centuries to free Reason from blind faith. Almost all the good and great among the holy Christians, otherwise admirable are, when it come to the question of Church, all closed minds.

What is the way out ?

The R.S.S. Way

According to the late Golwalkar, Chief of R.S.S. and the present Chief Deoras, religion need not be a compelling factor in determining the nationhood of a people. Religious Unity was long considered to be a potent unifying force in Europe and all means were employed by many states to secure such unity among their inhabitants. To the R.S.S. it was not an indispensable factor in its concept of the 'nation'. It was more a matter of conscience and must cease to colour the loyalities and outlook of the people about social and political matters. A common way of life rather than a common form of worship had been the most conspicuous feature of the Hindu national existence. The Hindu concept of unity or integration is harmony, certainly not uniformity. A man can be Hindu by nationality and at the same time be a Sanatani or an Arya Samaji, a Muslim or a Christian, a Sikh or a Buddhist.

In Golwalkar's Hinduism there is room enough for Jesus, as there is for Mohammed, Zoroaster and Moses. He would have been shocked if anybody had suggested anything less than equal rights to Muslims or Christians. He considered it as un-Hindu to discriminate between any two persons just on the basis of religious faith. He put it thus :

"The non-Hindu who lives here has a Rashtra-Dharma (National responsibility) a Samaja - Dharma (Duty to Society), a Kula-Dharma (Duty to ancestors) and only in his Vyakti-Dharma (Personal faith) can he choose any path which satisfies his spiritual urge. If even after fulfilling all those various duties in social life, anybody says that he has studied the Quran Sharif or the Bible and that way of worship strikes a sympathetic chord in his heart and that he can pray better through that path of devotion, we have absolutely no objection".

To a question - do you not approve religious toleration in respect of Islam & Christianity? Golwalkar and Deoras have repeatedly replied that they not only tolerated them but respected them. The R.S.S. wants India to be a land of many religious faiths as in the past, all equally honoured and respected, but of one National outlook.

* * * * * * * *

Q. 1 : You have taken it for granted that the Indian Christians are originally Hindus. But the original people of India are Dravidians, the Hindus have come to India originally as Aryans. Is not Hinduism also a foreign religion to India? and Hindus foreigners?

Ans. : There is, of course, a story of Aryan migration in history. Scholars have spent much of their time and energy examining the theory that the Aryans migrated to India from somewhere, some three or four thousand years ago.

Personally I hold that if there was any migration it was from India to outside, not from outside to India. I reject the hypothesis which maintains that Hindus are foreigners and India was a no man's land inhabited by only aboriginals. Following this theory all foreigners can be put on par with the Hindus. So the theory is repeated ad nauseam. Admitting, for argument sake (only for argument sake) that Hindus came from outside, the fact remains that Hinduism has grown with the history of this country and has become an inseparable part of this country. Hindus have throughout history, fought for this country, defended this country and died for this country. Here they grew as a people, a great race, propounded various religious beliefs and a philosophical system, evolving a high culture, and have beautified this country. The identification is total. We just want you to recognise this total identification. Without India Hindus have no other place to call their own and if there are no Hindus there is nobody to fight and die for this country as the motherland.

After independence the Government have been distributing the *Tamrapatras* to the freedom fighters. Whenever it has been possible for them to confer *Tamrapatras* on a Muslim gentleman or a Christian they would always be enthusiastic because they are searching for such gentlemen desparately. Please look at the list of the recipients and count how many Christians have secured it. Well the less said the better.

Nor do I hold Indian Christians foreigners. What is the meaning of the term 'Indian Christian'? Analyse the phrase. It is a Hindu who has (or whose forefathers had) embraced Christianity. Here the word 'Indian' means 'Hindu', that is, you are basically 'a Hindu'. Similarly, who is an Indian Mussalman? It is a Hindu who has (or whose ancestors have) embraced Islam. Here again 'Indian' connotes 'Hindu'. Have you ever come across the expression 'Indian Hindu'? Never, for the simple reason that the world believes that Indian means 'Hindu'. If so, can a Hindu be a foreigner in India?

Q. 2 : *I admire the discipline of the R.S.S. But I have a bit of a problem. The way a person thinks depends very much on the way he is brought up and the early teaching he had. The R.S.S. catches hold of young people and tries to brainwash them. They are taught to hate other religions, the Muslims, Christians and others. They cannot think straight, their mind is jaundiced and conditioned by this hatred.*

Ans. : Today's topic of talk is 'Relevance of Christianity in India', Let me remind you.

Now about the R.S.S. preaching hatred, Guruji Golwalkar, the former Chief of the R.S.S., and the present Chief Deoras have spoken for nearly fifty years now and abundant R.S.S. literature has piled up. I challenge anyone of you to point out a single derogatory word or expression towards Jesus Christ, Biblical teachings, Prophets of the Bible, Mohammed Paigambar or Koran, or pilgrimage to the Holy Land Jerusalem or Mecca or about anything which is exclusively religious. R.S.S. has nothing against the above; it just cannot even afford to be so for the simple reason that within the Hindu-fold numerous religions flourish. Religion is not the concern of the R.S.S. at all.

The attitude of R.S.S. towards any individual or any group of individuals is determined not on the basis of religious beliefs but by a different criterion, a different touchstone. What is that criterion? It is : 'what is your attitude towards this country, towards the people of this country, towards the integrity, independence and glory of this country, towards the welfare and domestic happiness of the millions and millions people of this country? It is on this basis that the attitude of the R.S.S. towards you is determined. If you love this country as your motherland, our countrymen as your brothers and do not entertain any ambition to inject any friction in their happy life by imposing your will upon them automatically you become our brother, because you consider honestly our mother as yours. But if you hold India as a pasture to impose your will, our attitude towards you changes. That is the R.S.S. criterion.

Q. 3 : I am grateful to you because you have spoken with great frankness. You have confirmed some of my own observations. The first step that the Christian Church should make is an act of confession of its guilts. I myself come from Goa and I know the history of the Portuguese. I know the wounded feelings of my Hindu brethren of Goa. You have made clear certain things I have been thinking myself. I know a considerable section of humanity is hurt by the policies of the Church. The Church must, therefore, make a confession. I do not want go back into history which is not bright but I want to ask : Do you see any ray of hope from the Christian quarters in India, as regards a dialogue or any relationship with the Hindu fraternity for a bright future, or do you think the future is as black as the past?

Ans. : I am very happy to hear the thoughtful words of this friend from Goa. We are not so mean minded as to want that anybody should come and plead guilty or confess guilt. Just call this mother country as your motherland and deeply love her as such, then all our problems with Christians are solved. It is just a question of changing your psychology. Our people have built temples, do not desecrate them, they have their scriptures, do not ridicule them. They have points of honour, respect them. There are heroes who have enriched, the heritage of this country, own them.

Though an Arya Samajist does not believe in image-worship, never does he desecrate it. That makes him a blood-brother with the rest. Never try to impose your idea of God on the others.

There is one small section of Christians who call themselves 'nationalist church'. They are the first bold section of Indian Christians who have freed themselves from the Church orthodoxy and have organised themselves on nationalist lines. It is a small number. It will take time. I wish it should grow and I hope it will grow. I want to believe that the Indian Christian is basically Indian, a man of this soil and a man who has eaten this salt. He might have changed his form of worship but he has not changed his ancestors. He cannot change his blood. Love of the country cannot so easily be erased. The call of the race spirit, and patriotism will surely one day undo excess of other things.

Q. 4 : *Happy to hear your formulation. People who believe in the Vedas and people who do not, worshippers of idols and non-worshippers are all Hindus. A beautiful formulation indeed! But one question occurs to me, would I be wrong if I consider you a Christian? Because the way you described the aspirations of the people in India, the way you identified yourself with the history of India, I thought you are fully a Christian. I hope you do not object to this ....*

Ans. : 'I' do not know what precisely the question means. To be a Christian is to adhere to a particular religious practice. I have been telling you 'Hindu' is not the name of any one particular religious belief. Hindu is the name of a nationality. You are speaking of adherence to a specific religious faith. I am speaking in terms of society, nation and people, not in terms God, mode of worship, or scripture. I emphasise the content of the word Hindu more than the word. The content of it is concerned with the country, the nation, its happiness and its future, not with the Church, the cathedral, the Priest, the Bible or the Sermon. I have nothing to do with it.

Q. 5 : *I am happy I am an Indian, am a Christian and I love my country. Can you clarify how the love of the country is affected because of my Christian religion?*

Ans. : To make my position clear I shall repeat what has been already said. If a person loves our country as he says (and I believe in it) and is ready to subordinate all other considerations of his life to the supreme interests of this nation, I pray 'May such people multiply'. But what about the activities of the Church? The conversions? (particularly Harijan conversions) the Nagaland problem? Phizo and Michael scots? Mizoram rebels who are fighting against Indian soldiers? If none of these can be traced to Christian preaching no problem need arise. But is it a fact?

If it does, then you must disown them. I have not come across any such disowning of them by any Christian quarter. If I do not know it I am open to correction. I would withdraw it.

I spoke on certain premises, I explained them, and they can be further explained if time permits. If my premises are wrong then nobody will be more happy than myself to be corrected.

Q. 6 : *After much thinking I have always felt I am a Hindu Christian. Whatever the past, today I want to identify myself with all that is Hindu. I am speaking only for myself. Secondly as a Hindu Christian I want to know whether I will be admitted into the R.S.S. I am a nationalist but can the R.S.S. admit me? But I have one condition 'as a Christian priest I must be allowed to have my Christian faith and share it with others'.*

Ans. : Allow me to deal with the second part of the question first and the first part of the question next.

There are already a few R.S.S. members who are Church-goers. They are taking part in the national and social work as envisaged by the R.S.S., they are Christian Hindus i.e. Hindu followers of Jesus Christ. They read the Bible, celebrate Christmas, attend Church on Sundays and receive Sermons. Births or marriages in their household are blessed and solemnised by Christian priests. They are as good Christians as any one of you. But they participate in R.S.S. programmes, and have subordinated all other considerations of life to the supreme interest of the nation like any other Hindu of the R.S.S. If this gentleman wants to add to that number the R.S.S. says 'Welcome'.

As was mentioned there is a past. Since the ghost of the past always haunts our mind let us seek a process of reconciliation. To begin with do you think this past is a story you should be proud of? Remember the inquisitions, the persecutions, fraudulent conversions and accompanying cruelty. It is a sad story and a bad story. Then what should be done? Is it wise to inject the explosive past into the present which can only damage the future? The answer is not to ignore, turn a blind eye or to justify the unhappy events of the past. There is a happy way out which I would like to illustrate with an example.

It is an example from the history of England. There was a queen called Mary Tudor. She was a Catholic. Her father and brother who ruled earlier were both opposed to the Pope of Rome and the Catholic Church. So when Mary Tudor a devoted Catholic Christian ascended the throne, she was anxious to undo what her predecessors had done and restore Papal supremacy and the predominance of the Catholic faith in England. She lost the sense of proportion and overdid the job. She introduced the 'Stake' i.e. burning religious heretics alive. Hitherto burning people alive in the name of religion was confined to Spain. She imported the ugly practice into England and thought she was serving Roman Catholic interests. It is a dark chapter in the history of the English people.

Today there are many Roman Catholics living in England but none of them own or condone what Mary did in the name of their religion. No psychological affinity with the event or its author is there. Or else a harmonious British national life would not have been possible at all. So they disown it. Once they disown it they need not be ashamed of it.

Why do you people own those unchristian things perpetrated in the name of 'Christianity'? Disown that ugly past. Or else how can you acquire that psychological affinity with the Hindu? There is much in Indian history for you to own, cherish and be proud of. It is your heritage, a heritage enriched by your forefathers whose blood flows and stirs in your nerves and veins. Own it.

Q. 7 : *As a man of the R.S.S. you must be knowing the number of Christians who have migrated away from India. What is the number in comparison with the Muslims and Hindus who have left this country?*

Ans. : Situated as I am, I do not have the figures with me. I beg to be excused for my inability to provide the figures. It is an area where I do not want to indulge in any guess work.

Q. 8 : *I should be grateful to you for the spirit of partiotism which you have infused into our minds and also for the other side of the Church history you have explained to us. But your explanation of 'Hindu', I as a man coming from Tamilnadu cannot agree. E.V.Ramaswami Naicker, himself a Hindu, went on to declare that there is no Hinduism in India at all, there is only Indianism. The Brahmins have given this title 'Hinduism' to Indianism and in the name of Hinduism you have exploited the Indians. That is how he put it. And this propaganda proved so effective that the Brahmin tradition maintained its hold on Tamilnadu till now. It is clear in view of its hold on the Congress party in Tamilnadu. In the name of Hinduism, Hindus are exploiting a vast number of Indians, Harijans and the lower class. There is no Hinduism in India but only Indianism.*

You spoke of Hindus being very tolerant. From my experience I cannot agree with this. In the district of Kanyakumari you can see what the Hindus particularly the R.S.S. have written on the walls and the posters. They have abused not only the priests and others but even our deep Faith, Christ and Our Lady.

Only five months back Hindus attacked the Churches with no provocation caused by the Christians.

People were shot dead. I am coming from a family where there are R.S.S. members. There were marriages and other celebrations together till last year. How could enemity be created in such families if there was tolerance? Muslims and Hindus were working together in the district. How could this hatred be created if at all Hindus were that tolerant. I have tasted it myself. I want to know your reactions.

Ans. : One of the favourite illusions, which gives some comfort to some, is to hold that there is no Hinduism in India etc. because Periyar Ramaswami Naicker said this and that. Coming from the south as I do, I am familiar with these men and their preachings.

To begin with, the Hindu Society is having its own problems, its evils like Untouchability and others. They are certainly stigmas on the Hindu society. Hindu reformers and organisations are doing their best to wipe them out. It is our concern. Take untouchability. It dwells in the heart of the caste Hindus. If that is plucked out, the problem will be solved but not by converting the downtrodden. Nobody is justifying these ills and evils. Birth of the R.S.S. itself was due to the social ills that have gripped the Hindu people. On that count no certificate need be given to the Hindu society. But it is our society and they are all our people.

Secondly Brahmin domination and Brahminism exploiting others. Had it been in my hands I would have awarded a big Prize for this wonderful discovery. What is the percentage of Brahmins in India? Look at any Indian village and see who the Brahmins are? A school teacher and a Post-master. Do they pose such a great threat or a danger to the other people of this country? Within the Hindu society there are E.V. Ramaswami Naicker and others who can abuse Rama* and Krishna. It is only reflective of the catholicity of the Hindu tradition. But do you want to live under illusions?

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* It was strange that Sri Ram who was looked down by him was a Kshatriya and Ravana who was eulogised was a Brahmin.

Go to a village in the Tamilnadu. Ramayana in Tamil by Kamban is recited and heard with the same devotion and rapt attention as it is recited in other languages and heard in other provinces. The ordinary villager in Tamilnadu also rejoices or weeps as the stories of Rama and Krishna are narrated. I am citing only one example of a common emotion being evoked. That is the basis of a people and a nation not what Ramaswami Naicker says on a plateform although Periyar E.V.R. Naicker, was in his own way, devoted to the reform of the Hindu society.

As for the troubles in Tamilnadu, as long as the Hindus are silent, quiet and easy-going, they are good boys. The moment they resist and retaliate (a time comes when they must retaliate) they become demons and devils. The treatment that has been given to the Vivekananda Rock Memorial at Kanyakumari by the Christians is the first phase, the reaction followed afterwards. What has been done in Nilakkal by the Christians is resisted by Hindus afterwards.

R.S.S. does not justify anybody who has uttered a single word of hatred towards another just because he is a Christian. It disowns such literature and its authors. But I do not want you to believe that the Christians in the Kanyakumari district are innocent lambs. Certainly they are not.

Q. 9 : I want one clarification. You said 'Don't vote according to the dictates of bishops or priests! Vote by yourselves. There is no proof that any Bishop or any priest has asked us to vote one way or the other. They are meant for our spiritual growth.

Ans. : I shall be very happy if that is really the state of affairs. I wish that such a situation should prevail. The political behaviour should be based on political considerations.

A religious group behaving in a particular political pattern is unhealthy; in fact that is the story of partition. If you are all assured that there is no direction so suggested, no whispering from your spiritual sources as to for whom to vote and for whom not to vote I will be the first person to rejoice over it.

Q. 10 : *I am a Naga Christian. I agree with you that when a Naga goes to Shillong, he says that 'he is going to India'. Nagas do speak that way. But I do not agree with you when you attribute it to Christianity. The reason is different.*

When I first came over here and went out to Ramawadi nearby in Pune along with my friend we were stopped on our way and we were accused as Chinese spies. The Nagas are still migrating away. We find that the culture and the race features are entirely different from the people here. And I am also inclined to compare the ignorance of the Nagas with the literate Indians.

Ans. : As a R.S.S. man I hold every Naga as my brother as he is a son of this soil. I referred to the Christian religious activities which led to the Naga rebellion. Well, to make the long story brief, it is a statement made by Pandit Nehru on the floor of the Parliament. If you hold that I am wrong, I am ready to share the ignorance with Jawaharlal Nehru.

Q. 11 : *I come from Kerala and my parents consider that they are Christians since long. We are fully identified with the Hindu traditions of our state. You described how to love our mother country. We have done a lot of harm to our people and also a lot of good to our country. We are proud of Indian heritage as you are. Any claim of monopoly of patriotism is arrogance. Have you the right prescription of how to love our mother country? We are as much Indians by heritage by contribution and by history. It hurts to hear that you alone have the right formula to solve the problems of our motherland.*

Ans. : I have already spoken on this aspect once. No responsible R.S.S.man harbours an iota of dislike against anyone because of Christianity or any other religion. I have taken the generality of Christians in India. I have traced a brief history of it and I have referred to certain grievances of the Hindus and on that basis I maintain that a good patriot should not do so. If this particular gentleman, coming from a particular part of Kerala, sharing the common heritage has not indulged in such base things, I hold that he is as good a patriot as any other patriotic Hindu.

Rs. Four

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